

DRILLING FLUID REQUIREMENTS

§ 250.455 What are the general requirements for a drilling fluid program?

You must design and implement your drilling fluid program to prevent the loss of well control. This program must address drilling fluid safe practices, testing and monitoring equipment, drilling fluid quantities, and drilling fluid-handling areas.

[68 FR 8423, Feb. 20, 2003]

§ 250.456 What safe practices must the drilling fluid program follow?

Your drilling fluid program must include the following safe practices:

(a) Before starting out of the hole with drill pipe, you must properly condition the drilling fluid. You must circulate a volume of drilling fluid equal to the annular volume with the drill pipe just off-bottom. You may omit this practice if documentation in the driller's report shows:

(1) No indication of formation fluid influx before starting to pull the drill pipe from the hole;

(2) The weight of returning drilling fluid is within 0.2 pounds per gallon (1.5 pounds per cubic foot) of the drilling fluid entering the hole; and

(3) Other drilling fluid properties are within the limits established by the program approved in the APD.

(b) Record each time you circulate drilling fluid in the hole in the driller's report;

(c) When coming out of the hole with drill pipe, you must fill the annulus with drilling fluid before the hydrostatic pressure decreases by 75 psi, or every five stands of drill pipe, whichever gives a lower decrease in hydrostatic pressure. You must calculate the number of stands of drill pipe and drill collars that you may pull before you must fill the hole. You must also calculate the equivalent drilling fluid volume needed to fill the hole. Both sets of numbers must be posted near the driller's station. You must use a mechanical, volumetric, or electronic device to measure the drilling fluid required to fill the hole;

(d) You must run and pull drill pipe and downhole tools at controlled rates so you do not swab or surge the well;

(e) When there is an indication of swabbing or influx of formation fluids, you must take appropriate measures to control the well. You must circulate and condition the well, on or near-bottom, unless well or drilling-fluid conditions prevent running the drill pipe back to the bottom;

(f) You must calculate and post near the driller's console the maximum pressures that you may safely contain under a shut-in BOP for each casing string. The pressures posted must consider the surface pressure at which the formation at the shoe would break down, the rated working pressure of the BOP stack, and 70 percent of casing burst (or casing test as approved by the District Manager). As a minimum, you must post the following two pressures:

(1) The surface pressure at which the shoe would break down. This calculation must consider the current drilling fluid weight in the hole; and

(2) The lesser of the BOP's rated working pressure or 70 percent of casing-burst pressure (or casing test otherwise approved by the District Manager);

(g) You must install an operable drilling fluid-gas separator and degasser before you begin drilling operations. You must maintain this equipment throughout the drilling of the well;

(h) Before pulling drill-stem test tools from the hole, you must circulate or reverse-circulate the test fluids in the hole. If circulating out test fluids is not feasible, you may bullhead test fluids out of the drill-stem test string and tools with an appropriate kill weight fluid;

(i) When circulating, you must test the drilling fluid at least once each tour, or more frequently if conditions warrant. Your tests must conform to industry-accepted practices and include density, viscosity, and gel strength; hydrogenion concentration; filtration; and any other tests the District Manager requires for monitoring and maintaining drilling fluid quality, prevention of downhole equipment problems and for kick detection. You must record the results of these tests in the drilling fluid report; and

(j) In areas where permafrost and/or hydrate zones are present or may be

Minerals Management Service, Interior

§ 250.459

present, you must control drilling fluid temperatures to drill safely through those zones.

[68 FR 8423, Feb. 20, 2003; 68 FR 14274, Mar. 24, 2003]

§ 250.457 What equipment is required to monitor drilling fluids?

Once you establish drilling fluid returns, you must install and maintain the following drilling fluid-system monitoring equipment throughout subsequent drilling operations. This equipment must have the following indicators on the rig floor:

(a) Pit level indicator to determine drilling fluid-pit volume gains and losses. This indicator must include both a visual and an audible warning device;

(b) Volume measuring device to accurately determine drilling fluid volumes required to fill the hole on trips;

(c) Return indicator devices that indicate the relationship between drilling fluid-return flow rate and pump discharge rate. This indicator must include both a visual and an audible warning device; and

(d) Gas-detecting equipment to monitor the drilling fluid returns. The indicator may be located in the drilling fluid-logging compartment or on the rig floor. If the indicators are only in the logging compartment, you must continually man the equipment and have a means of immediate communication with the rig floor. If the indicators are on the rig floor only, you must install an audible alarm.

[68 FR 8423, Feb. 20, 2003]

§ 250.458 What quantities of drilling fluids are required?

(a) You must use, maintain, and replenish quantities of drilling fluid and drilling fluid materials at the drill site as necessary to ensure well control. You must determine those quantities based on known or anticipated drilling conditions, rig storage capacity, weather conditions, and estimated time for delivery.

(b) You must record the daily inventories of drilling fluid and drilling fluid materials, including weight materials and additives in the drilling fluid report.

(c) If you do not have sufficient quantities of drilling fluid and drilling fluid material to maintain well control, you must suspend drilling operations.

[68 FR 8423, Feb. 20, 2003]

§ 250.459 What are the safety requirements for drilling fluid-handling areas?

You must classify drilling fluid-handling areas according to API RP 500, Recommended Practice for Classification of Locations for Electrical Installations at Petroleum Facilities, Classified as Class I, Division 1 and Division 2 (incorporated by reference as specified in §250.198); or API RP 505, Recommended Practice for Classification of Locations for Electrical Installations at Petroleum Facilities, Classified as Class 1, Zone 0, Zone 1, and Zone 2 (incorporated by reference as specified in §250.198). In areas where dangerous concentrations of combustible gas may accumulate, you must install and maintain a ventilation system and gas monitors. Drilling fluid-handling areas must have the following safety equipment:

(a) A ventilation system capable of replacing the air once every 5 minutes or 1.0 cubic feet of air-volume flow per minute, per square foot of area, whichever is greater. In addition:

(1) If natural means provide adequate ventilation, then a mechanical ventilation system is not necessary;

(2) If a mechanical system does not run continuously, then it must activate when gas detectors indicate the presence of 1 percent or more of combustible gas by volume; and

(3) If discharges from a mechanical ventilation system may be hazardous, then you must maintain the drilling fluid-handling area at a negative pressure. You must protect the negative pressure area by using at least one of the following: a pressure-sensitive alarm, open-door alarms on each access to the area, automatic door-closing devices, air locks, or other devices approved by the District Manager;

(b) Gas detectors and alarms except in open areas where adequate ventilation is provided by natural means. You must test and recalibrate gas detectors quarterly. No more than 90 days may elapse between tests;